SCADDING

CENTENNIAL
OF UPPER CANADA
1892

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CENTENNIAL OF UPPER CANADA

NOW THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO:

THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM, JULY 16, 1792.

A Paper Read before the Pioneer and Historical Society of the County of York, Ontario, by the Rev. Dr. Scadding, President.

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THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM, JULY 16, 1792.

THE Pioneer and Historical Society of the County of York keep their annual festival this year on the 16th of July, in commemoration of the fact that on that day, in the year 1792, was issued the Royal Proclamation dividing the new Province of Upper Canada into counties, and, at the same time, setting forth the number of representatives which the inhabitants of each county were to send to the Provincial Parliament. The 16th July, 1792, was thus, as it were, the birthday of an organized constitutional Government for the Province of Upper Canada, that is to say, for the existing Province of Ontario.

The Governor of the new Province had arrived at Quebec on the 11th of November, 1791, by the ship *Triton*, but various unavoidable delays had occurred, arising partly from insufficient instructions, partly from the non-appearance of a small military force expected from Halifax, and also the non-arrival of certain persons from England (Osgoode and Russell), who were to be important officials, so that it was not until towards the end of May, of the following year, that Governor Simcoe was enabled to proceed westward from Quebec to take possession of his Province. However, we find him at last at Montreal.

He has only recently received despatches from the Home Government, the first which had reached his hands since his departure from England. These being satisfactory, he was enabled to proceed. He advances from Montreal, surrounded by a brigade of canoes, up the St. Lawrence—styled in a letter of his "one of the most august of rivers."

In due time he is at Kingston, and this being at that period the most important post within the limits of his jurisdiction, he considers it proper to summon together at that spot as many of the substantial folk of the surrounding region as was found to be practicable, and to have read in their hearing the commission with which he had been entrusted by the King, and to have administered to himself the requisite oaths. All this was accordingly done with due solemnity on the 8th of July. He next made known the names of those who were by Royal Commission to be appointed members of the Executive and Legislative Councils, and then, on the 16th of the same month, he caused to be issued a Proclamation, which has become memorable in our annals as securing to the whole population of the Province, in all future time, a just representation in Parliament—the first instance in British history of the concession of self-government to a colony, from its very outset, by the joint action of King, Lords and Commons. Printed copies of this Proclamation in pamphlet form were doubtless previously prepared in Quebec or Montreal, which could be conveniently handed to the members of the Executive Council and other official persons to be circulated by them in their respective neighbourhoods. It was evidently a document a little too bulky to be comprised within the customary broadside or poster. In a manuscript copy furnished by Mr. Brymner from the archives at Ottawa, it covers nineteen closely-written folios; and in Hugh C. Thomson and James Macfarlane's Statutes of Upper Canada, published at Kingston in 1831, it fills four large quarto pages (pp. 24 to 27). On the very next day after the delivery of this celebrated Proclamation, Governor Simcoe is on the move westward. The objective point at which he is aiming is Newark, or West Niagara, as it was afterwards called, a place become familiar to us now as Niagara-on-the-Lake; here in due time the new Governor arrives in safety, and on the 21st of August we find him dating from that place his despatch to the Secretary for the Colonies, Henry Dundas, announcing the formal issue of his Proclamation, and enclosing a copy of the same. Newark was for a time to be considered as the capital of his Province, and here

he began at once vigorously to employ himself in establishing and getting into working order the several departments of his Government, and to carry into effect the several provisions of the Imperial Act, which had divided the Province of Quebec into the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada.

He took up his residence in quarters hastily prepared for him in a large frame store-house, situated close to the landing-place a little way up from the mouth of the river on its western side. This temporary place of abode, from the fact of its having been built for the purpose of sheltering naval stores appertaining to the Government shipping upon the lake, became far-famed throughout the country as "Navy Hall."

It is the recollection of these various incidents that renders the old town of Niagara a focus of attraction so widely interesting in this centennial year, 1892.

The Preamble of the very notable Proclamation of which we have spoken, after reciting the official titles of the King George III., reads as follows :—

"Whereas in pursuance of an Act of Parliament, lately made and provided, passed in the thirty-first year of our reign and of authority by us given for that purpose, our late Province of Quebec is become divided into the two Provinces of Upper Canada and Lower Canada, and our Lieutenant-Governor of the said Province of Upper Canada, by power from us derived, is authorized in the absence of our right trusty and well-beloved Guy, Lord Dorchester, Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of our said Province of Upper Canada, to divide into districts, counties, circles, or towns and townships, for the purpose of effectuating the intent of the said Act of Parliament and to declare and appoint the members of the representatives to be chosen by each to serve in the Assembly of the said Province.

Know ye therefore that our trusty and well-beloved, John Graves Simcoe, Esquire, Lieutenant-Governor of our said Province of Upper Canada, in the absence of our said Governor-in-Chief, hath, and by this our Proclamation doth divide the said Province of Upper Canada into coun-

ties, and hath and doth declare and appoint the number of representatives of them, and each to be as herein limited, named, declared, and appointed."

The counties and their representatives are then enumerated (of which more at large presently), and the Proclamation, after enjoining "our loving subjects and all others concerned to take due notice to govern themselves accordingly," concludes as follows :—

"In testimony whereof we have caused these our letters to be made patent and the great seal of our said Province of Upper Canada to be hereunto affixed. Witness our trusty and well-beloved, John Graves Simcoe, Esquire, our Lieutenant-Governor of our said Province of Upper Canada, and Colonel commanding our forces in Upper Canada, etc., etc., etc., at our Government House in the town of Kingston, this sixteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two, and in the thirty-second year of our reign." The simple initials J. G. S. are appended, but at the beginning of the Proclamation the name of the Governor appears in full just above the royal name. The name of the Secretary is added, "William Jarvis." The dignified expression "our Government House in the town of Kingston" probably describes the quarters assigned to the commandant of the garrison at that post.

Of the nineteen counties, into which according to the Proclamation Upper Canada was to be divided, eight were to bear the name of certain English counties, Durham, Essex, Kent, Lincoln, Norfolk, Northumberland, Suffolk, and York ; one (Frontenac) was named after the Count de Frontenac, twice Governor-General of Canada, founder of Fort Frontenac in 1672 on the site where Kingston now stands ; and one, Ontario, had its name from the Lake ; not coinciding with the present county of that name, but consisting wholly of islands scattered along in front of the mainland. Eight were named in honour of eminent statesmen and other personages of the period. Addington, from Speaker Addington, afterwards Lord Sidmouth ; Dundas from Henry Dundas, the Secretary for the Colonies, afterwards known as Lord Melville. (The

important highway subsequently hewn out through the whole length of the Province, from Chatham to the Ottawa, passing directly through what is now the city of Toronto, and Kingston, was as we shall remember named Dundas Street in honour of the same personage.) Grenville, probably from George Grenville, successor to Lord Bute, 1763. Leeds, from the Duke of Leeds, of the day. Lennox, from the family name of the Duke of Richmond (a name which may have been acceptable to George the Third for certain reasons). Stormont, from a secondary title of the Chief Justice Lord Mansfield, 1776 (he was Viscount Stormont in the Peerage of Scotland). Prince Edward County, from the King's son, the Duke of Kent, father of her present Majesty. Finally, the county of Glengarry, had its name from the large settlement already established within its limits, of Highlanders, belonging to the Glengarry branch of the clan Macdonald, U. E. Loyalists who came over into Canada from the other side of the lakes at the time of the American Revolution ; reinforced by numerous emigrants from the Highlands of Scotland, belonging to the same branch of the clan Macdonald at a later period, consisting largely of the Glengarry Fensibles, a regiment of the line lately disbanded. As to the county of York, the name may have been intended as a compliment to Frederick the Duke of York, brother of Prince Edward, and not a mere reproduction of the name of the county in England. Compliments, we find, had already been paid to members of the Royal family in these parts, prior to the setting off of the new Province of Upper Canada, in names which in some instances still survive, *e.g.*, Adolphus-town, Sophias-burg, Ernest-town, etc.

After defining the nineteen counties the Proclamation sets forth the number of members which are to represent them in the Legislative Assembly. In one or two instances two whole counties are to send only one member to Parliament, and in one case a portion of even a third county is to be associated for electoral purposes with two other counties ; so that on the whole there were to be only sixteen members in the House of Assembly. In marking out the boundaries of the several counties, care

has been taken not to encroach upon the Indian Lands or Mississaga tract, as the expression is, in the western part of the new Province, not yet ceded by treaty. This fact renders the description here and there somewhat difficult to understand in the absence of a map with the lines clearly marked.

The word "Riding" throughout the Proclamation, through a popular misconception has been wrongly applied. Riding strictly means a third part, and is a corruption of the old Scandinavian word "Thriding," or "Thirding." It is correctly used in relation to the great county of York in England, wherein we have three ridings mentioned—the east, west and north. The Canadian county of York—also Glengarry—is divided into two ridings, and Lincoln into four. The west riding of York extends as far west as the River Thames. Kent, likewise, appears to cover a large area. The Proclamation sets forth that this county "comprehends all the country (not being territory of the Indians) not already included in the several counties herein before described extending northward to the boundary line of Hudson's Bay, including all the territory to the westward and southward of the said line, to the utmost extent of the country commonly called or known by the name of Canada." (A marked map is here evidently needed.)

From this Proclamation some other familiar names besides those of our counties are to be dated. Then it is announced that the name "Thames" is to be henceforward attached to the river called by the French "La Tranche." Wolfe Island is to supersede "Grande Isle." Amherst Island is to take the place of Isle "Tonti." Howe Island obliterates "Isle Couchois," and Gage Island does the same for "Isle au Foret." Burlington Bay, too, appears now as a new name, displacing "Lake of Geneva," an appellation, it would seem, previously in use to designate this sheet of water. One change has not taken effect. Grand River falling into Lake Erie was declared to be the Ouse; an alias for the Ottawa used in the Proclamation is also Grand River; a name which has been dropped. Grand River, of course, signifies nothing but "Grande Rivière," which would simply be a transla-

tion of some Indian word meaning "Big River." Chippewa Creek has also well kept its own as against Welland River, the upper portion of the stream being known by the latter name, whilst the lower portion retains its former appellation. The old Government Gazetteer (1797) informs the reader that "Chippewa Creek (or Chipeweigh River) is called the Welland by Proclamation, the 16th July, 1792."

The representation in Parliament of the several counties enumerated in the Proclamation was to be as follows: Glengarry was to have two members, one for each riding; Stormont was to have one; Dundas, one; Grenville, one; Leeds and Frontenac together are to send one; likewise Ontario and Addington are to send one; Prince Edward and a portion of Lennox shall send one; the rest of Lennox is to combine with the two whole counties of Hastings and Northumberland in sending one member; Durham and York are to unite with the first riding of Lincoln in sending one member. The second riding of Lincoln has a member to itself, as also has the third; the fourth riding is to combine with the county of Norfolk in sending one; the counties of Suffolk and Essex together are to send one; the inhabitants of the county of Kent are numerous enough to demand two representatives. The Provincial Gazetteer of D. W. Smith, published by authority in 1797, gives the boundaries of the counties as just defined, and the members to be returned by each respectively to the Provincial Parliament, and in every case the Proclamation now before us of the 16th July, 1792, is referred to as a quasi charter of the electoral rights of the people. Thus in the case of Glengarry the words of the Gazetteer are: "The boundaries of this county were established by Proclamation, the 16th July, 1792; it consists of two ridings, each of which sends one representative to the Provincial Parliament," and again in the case of the county of York, the words of the Gazetteer are: "The boundaries of this county were established by Proclamation, 16th July, 1792; it sends, in connection with the county of Durham and the first riding of the county of Lincoln, one representative to the Provincial Parliament," and so on with the rest of the counties. It

will not be inappropriate to add the contents of the bronze medal now being executed by the skilful die-sinker, P. W. Ellis of Toronto, commemorative of the present centennial year. This medal shows, on the one side, a head of Simcoe designed from the medallion on his monument in the Cathedral at Exeter, Devon, surrounded by the words: "John Graves Simcoe, Lieut.-Governor, A. D. 1791–A. D. 1796"; on the other side, near the edge of the medal, are the words: "Upper Canada: Since 1867, Ontario." Within these words, and running in straight lines across the medal, are the three following inscriptions:—

REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM PROCLAIMED, KINGSTON. JULY 16, A. D. 1792.

FIRST PARLIAMENT OPENED, NIAGARA, SEPTEMBER 17, A. D. 1792.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATED, A. D. 1892.

The inscriptions are in small capitals, all of one size.